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WASHINGTON LETTER.

WASHINGTON, JUNE 20, 1895.

The first Government exploration of the mineral fields of Alaska is authorized by an act of the last Congress which appropriated \$5,000 "for an investigation of the coal and gold resources of Alaska," to be expended under the direction of the Geological Survey. Prof. George F. Becker (mining expert), Prof. W. H. Dall (Alaska expert), and C. W. Purrington (assistant to Prof. Becker), are already at Sitka, from whence they will go to Kadiak Islands, Cook Inlet, and possibly as far west as Shumagin. They are expected to make a practical study of the economic geology of the Territory. The most productive gold mines in this Territory are located on a belt or zone beginning at Mexico, and running from southeast to northwest, in almost a straight line, to the Arctic Ocean. On this belt, which varies in width from two to twenty miles, are the mines about Juneau, Berner's Bay, Gold Creek, and the placer mines of the Yukon Valley, Forty Mile and Miller creeks.

Prof. Becker has completed his investigations of the gold-producing districts of the southern Appalachian region, on which he has been engaged since last August. He considers this oldest gold-producing region of the country a good mineral one, and the prospects for investment excellent for moderate returns—say 10 to 15 per cent. There are not likely to be any great fortunes made, nor any bonanzas discovered. The gold region is best defined in the Carolinas and Georgia, especially in the southwestern part of North Carolina.

GEOLOGIC MAPS.—As has been already stated in the BULLETIN, the plan adopted for the geologic map contemplates the division of the entire area of the United States into small rectangular districts, bounded by certain meridians and parallels. The maps and descriptions of each rectangular district are issued in folio form. Each folio is designated by the name of the principal town or of a prominent natural feature within the district. It contains topographic, geologic, economic, and structural maps of the area, together with explanations and descriptions. When all the folios are completed they will constitute a geologic atlas of the United States.

The folios now ready for distribution are the following:

NO.	NAME OF SHEET.	STATE.	LIMITING MERIDIANS.	LIMITING PARALLELS.
1	Livingston	Montana.	110°-111°	45°-46°
2	Ringgold.....	Georgia Tennessee.....	85°-85° 30'	34° 30'-35°
3	Placerville.....	California.	120° 30'-121°	38° 30'-39°
4	Kingston.....	Tennessee	84° 30'-85°	35° 30'-36°
5	Sacramento.....	California.....	121°-121° 30'	38° 30'-39°
6	Chattanooga.....	Tennessee	85°-85° 30'	35°-35° 30'
7	Pike's Peak.....	Colorado.....	105°-105° 30'	38° 30'-39°
8	Sewanee.....	Tennessee.....	85° 30'-86°	35°-35° 30'
9	Anthracite-Crested Butte...	Colorado.....	106° 45'-107° 15'	38° 45'-39°
10	Harper's Ferry.....	Virginia..... West Virginia .	77° 30'-78°	39°-39° 30'
11	Jackson.....	Maryland California.....	120° 30'-121°	38°-38° 30'
12	Estillville.....	Virginia..... Kentucky..... Tennessee.....	82° 30'-83°	36° 30'-37°
13	Fredericksburg	Maryland Virginia	77°-77° 30'	38°-38° 30'
14	Staunton.....	Virginia.....	79°	38°

At the uniform price of 25 cents for each folio.

The methods and results of the primary triangulation executed by the United States Geological Survey during the past twelve years, that is to say, since the commencement of work upon the topographic atlas, are stated by Mr. Henry Gannett with great minuteness in a recent Bulletin of the Survey (No. 122). The results have been arranged in chapters by geographical groups, such as New England, New York and Pennsylvania, Southern Appalachian region, etc. Something over one thousand stations are located and described. In explanation of methods, Mr. Gannett says that wherever work has been done by other organizations, which is of sufficient accuracy for the control of the maps of the Geological Survey, such work has been utilized. The work of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, of the Lake Survey, of the New York State Survey has been extensively used. In the interior of the country and in the Far West, the work has been done *ab initio*; but the triangulation executed by early surveys in the West, known as the Hayden, Powell and Wheeler surveys, has been utilized to some extent for the control or initiation of work; that of the Wheeler but little, that of the Hayden to a greater extent, especially in Colorado. That of the Powell Survey, the results of which have never heretofore been published, has been used very largely. The seventeen maps accom-

panying this work describe graphically the triangulations already secured.

Mr. Gannett has in press a Dictionary of Geographic Positions.

TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS.—Under a provision of the Sundry Civil Service Act for 1895-'96, which goes into operation July 1, 1895, the Director of the Geological Survey is authorized to sell copies of topographical maps of the United States now in course of construction, with text, at cost, and ten per cent. added. The Director (Mr. Charles D. Walcott) has the plan of issuing these maps under consideration. The proposition is to issue ten maps at one time, with descriptive text, as a folio. These maps will illustrate ten distinct phases of topography that occur within the area of the United States. Subsequent folios will each contain ten maps, illustrating some particular type of topography, as that of the Appalachian Mountain system, that of the Atlantic Coastal Plain region, etc. The cost of these folios will probably not exceed 25 cents. The extent to which the plan will be carried has not yet been fully determined.

The following topographic atlas sheets have been engraved and printed since January 1, 1895:

New York: Mount Marcy.	New York: Willsboro.
Ontario Beach.	Cambridge.
Rochester.	Ithaca.
Plattsburg.	Elmira.
Mooers.	Catskill.
Rouse Point.	Rhinebeck.
Syracuse.	New Hampshire: Crawford Notch.
Chittenango.	Washington: Seattle.
Oneida.	Oklahoma: Kingfisher.
Oriskany.	Virginia—West Virginia:
Watertown.	Tazewell.
Pulaski.	North Dakota: Savo.
Sacketts Harbor.	Nebraska: Grand Island.
Stony Island.	Wood River.
Cape Vincent.	Colorado: Cripple Creek.
Ausable.	Florida: Citra.

Hereafter the report on the Mineral Resources of the United States will be issued as a part of the report of the Director of the Geological Survey, and printed as soon as completed. Separate chapters on any given mineral product will be printed as rapidly as transmitted for publication. The accompanying papers of the Director's annual report, that are of a strictly economic character, will also be issued in pamphlet form.

Congress, at its last session, directed that one copy of each monograph, bulletin or report of the Geological Survey printed prior to the year 1894 should be sent to two public libraries, to be designated by each Senator, Representative and Delegate; such public libraries to be additional to those to which said publications are distributed under existing laws.

A work soon to be issued by the Geological Survey is *The Glacial Lake Agassiz*, by Warren Upham.

Mr. C. D. Perrine, in a recent Bulletin of the Survey (No. 129), describes the earthquakes in California, in 1894.

In providing for a survey of the Indian Territory, Congress at its last session departed from a long usage, viz., the survey of public lands by U. S. Surveyors-General under the General Land Office, and in this case—the first instance of the kind—authorized the Secretary of the Interior to have the new survey of this Territory made under the direction of the Geological Survey. The Director has already sent parties to the field. Work has been commenced on the Chickasaw lands, and will be carried westward therefrom. It is expected that this portion will be completed by the close of the year, or at least by next spring. The enactment of Congress provides that when any surveys have been made and plats and field notes thereof prepared, they shall be approved and certified to by the Director of the Geological Survey, and that such surveys, field notes and plats shall have the same legal effect and force as heretofore given to the acts of the Surveyors-General.

The United States Board on Geographic names, which it will be remembered was created five years ago by an Executive order, held its 42d meeting recently and adjourned until September next. More than twenty-five hundred cases of disputed names have been decided.

The prominent departures from old methods of speaking which have been approved by the Board, and therefore become binding on all Government officials, are these: Dropping the final "h" in the termination "burgh"; abbreviation of "borough" to "boro"; the spelling of "center" (not like "centre"); the discontinuance of the use of the hyphen in connecting parts of names; the omission of "C. H." after the names of county seats; simplification of names consisting of more than one word by their combination into one word; the avoidance of the use of diacritic characters; the avoidance of the use of the possessive form of names, and the dropping of the words "city" and "town" as parts of names.

The Hydrographic Office, in recent issues of *Notices to Mariners*,

furnishes a large amount of new information concerning Alaska. A Coast Survey chart of Cook Inlet (1886) is reproduced, with additions in 1894 by Lieut. J. B. Collins, of the *U. S. S. Mohican*. Lieut. Collins describes with minuteness the coast, the villages, mountains, volcanoes and adjacent islands of this great inlet, from Chugatz Islands to Kamishak Bay. At Redoubt Bay there is a well-marked glacier.

In the same publication Lieut. G. A. Merriam, of the *U. S. S. Concord*, has new descriptions of several islands in the Aleutian group; making important corrections in geographical positions and areas, as in the case of Unalaska Island. Concerning Bogoslof Islands he says: "The proximity of Bogoslof Islands, while hidden in dense fog, was detected when several miles to leeward of them by a smell of sulphur and guano. The birds in this vicinity are numerous. It is reported that Bogoslof is now only one-third of its original height. The water was disturbed on the eastern side of the northern island, and smoke and steam were visible." He says that Yunaska Island is charted about four or five miles northward and westward of its true position. The Islands of Four Mountains of this group are incorrectly shown on the chart in number, grouping and positions. The *Concord* found two islands, both volcano peaks, and not charted, off the west end of Chuginadak, separated by deep channels from the latter and from one another. There is no island westward of Kagamil Island where Kigalgin Island is shown on the charts.

The *Notice* of February 16 contains a new chart of the northwest coast of Umnak Island from an exploration in 1894 by Lieut. E. F. Leiper, U. S. N., of the *Concord*. The issue of February 23d has a chart of the Islands of Four Mountains, from explorations by the same officer.

The Hydrographic Office announces that numerous reports have been received from United States vessels, to the effect that the Semidi Islands are incorrectly charted; and the same as to Cape St. Elias, Cape Suckling and Cape Hinchinbrook and Montague Island.

Concerning the latter island Lieut. Collins makes an interesting statement in *Notices* of February 23d, and in the same issue he gives some general information about the south coast of Alaska peninsula from Kupreanof Point to Cape Pankof.

The same Office has issued a supplement to the Sailing Directory for Bering Sea and the coast of Alaska (edition of 1869), bringing data to the present time. This is the latest and best geography of the region from Point Manley, Yakutat Bay to the Semidi Islands,

including Prince William Sound, Cook Inlet, and the Kadiak, Afognak and Trinity group of islands.

In this connection may be noticed also the third Supplement to the Sailing Directory for Newfoundland and Labrador (edition of 1884); and the third Supplement to the Sailing Directory for the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico (edition of 1890). These volumes contain not merely sailing directions, but the latest geographic investigations and discoveries made by American and foreign navigators.

The Hydrographic Office gives notice that it desires to connect itself with the nautical practice of the Great Lakes. In pursuance of this object it will place within the reach of mariners of the lakes much useful nautical information that cannot be profitably collected and published by private individuals. Some of its publications are circulated among mariners without charge, but in the nature of an exchange, it being presumed that mariners will co-operate with the Office in collecting information for the general benefit. Branch offices, where useful information and the publications of the Office may be procured, have been established at several prominent points on the lakes.

In pursuance of this object the Office commenced March 15th the monthly publication of *Notices to Mariners for the Great Lakes*, occupying a field corresponding to the long and well known *Notices to Mariners* (of seas, etc.). It is in the interests of the immense and rapidly growing lake commerce. Over thirteen millions of registered tonnage passed through St. Mary's Ship Canal alone last season. Steamships quite equal to many of the Atlantic liners will soon carry freight from Chicago direct to European ports, *via* the enlarged Welland Canal. The Hydrographic catalogue of maps includes one hundred and twenty charts of the great water-way from Lake Superior to the Atlantic.

This Office also has in preparation a series of sailing directions for the Great Lakes. There have been published three volumes, covering (1) Lake Superior, including St. Mary's River and Straits of Mackinac; (2) Lake Michigan, including Green Bay and Straits of Mackinac; (3) Lake Huron, including St. Clair and Detroit rivers, and Lake St. Clair. These volumes will be followed by (4) Lakes Erie and Ontario, including the St. Lawrence River to Montreal. At this point connection is made with Hydrographic Publication No. 100, published in 1891, which covers the Gulf and River St. Lawrence, etc.; thus giving complete sailing directions from Duluth to the Atlantic.

These volumes have geographic value also, because they describe the latest developments of the regions traversed.

For the last ten years Mr. George W. Littlehales of the United States Hydrographic Office has been engaged in collecting observations with a view of providing for the deduction of values of the rates of secular change of the variation of the compass for use on the nautical charts of the regions in which the stations are situated. He presents his discussion of part of the observations in a little volume recently published by the Hydrographic Office, entitled *Contributions to Terrestrial Magnetism, the Variation of the Compass*.

The observations have been made at fifty-one of the principal maritime stations of the world since the year 1589, the outranking ones being the Azores (Fayal), Batavia (Java), Cape of Good Hope, Nossi Bé, St. Helena, Aden, and St. Vincent (Cape Verde Islands).

There are also recorded in a form for discussion 1,953 observations at 920 other important maritime stations which he proposes to investigate as soon as the collection of data have become sufficient.

Mr. Littlehales says: "The results as presented also give values of the variation throughout the range of observation, and for the years 1895, 1900 and 1905, and provide the means for readily deducing the value of the variation for any past year not greatly beyond the range of observation, and also for predicting, within an assigned measure of precision, values for the years up to 1910, for the purpose of stating the correct direction of the magnetic meridian on the charts."

By an act of the last Congress, the States west of the Mississippi containing arid or desert public lands are entitled to receive from the Government, free of cost of survey or price, not to exceed one million acres of such land in any one State, on the proviso that any State making application for the same shall cause such land to be irrigated and reclaimed on such plans as the Secretary of the Interior shall approve.

The States affected by this legislation are California, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, North and South Dakota, Nevada, Utah, Colorado and Kansas, if the latter has any land still open to settlement that can be called arid. The object of the enactment is declared to be "to aid the public land States in the reclamation of the desert lands therein, and the settlement, cultivation and sale thereof in small tracts to actual settlers"; that is to say, in quarter sections to citizens who shall settle on them.

Before the application of any State is allowed or any segregation of land from the public domain ordered, the State must file a map of

the land proposed to be irrigated, which shall exhibit a plan showing the mode of the contemplated irrigation. But the State shall not be authorized to lease any of the lands or to use or dispose of the same except to secure their reclamation, cultivation and settlement.

It is reported that the Government of Great Britain has selected Fanning Island, located 1,200 miles southward of the Hawaiian group, as a mid-ocean landing for a Pacific cable; the effort to secure a landing on Necker Island having failed on account of a treaty arrangement between the United States and Hawaii which prevented such concession. Fanning Island, over which Great Britain raised her flag in 1888, was discovered by an American ship in 1798. It is ten miles long, four miles wide, of an oval shape, and incloses an harbor.

The line projected is from Victoria, B. C., to Australia. From Victoria to Fanning Island the distance is 3,860 miles, and to Australia, 7,000 miles. The estimated cost is about \$1,000 per mile.

Meanwhile, Mr. A. J. Coote, an Australian who is interested in different cables, is reported to be on his way to Washington with a proposition to lay a line from Monterey to Honolulu. He is said to represent a French company which is willing to build from Sydney to San Francisco, taking in Auckland, Samoa and Honolulu.

The Canadian Government is informed that the Hawaiian Government has made important concessions to Huddarts' Australian Steamship Line, by which the company, in consideration of carrying all Hawaiian mails without charge, and of holding the present schedule of passenger and freight rates, is given freedom from all charges at the port of Honolulu, except pilotage and water, and free use of land for the storage of coal for its vessels.

Attention was called in the last issue of the BULLETIN to Mr. Rockhill's "Diary of a Journey through Mongolia and Tibet in 1891 and 1892." There has recently appeared from the pen of the same writer, "Notes on the Ethnology of Tibet," published as an extract or "separate" from the Report of the U. S. National Museum for 1893. The work is based upon the Tibetan Ethnological collection in the Museum, which is liberally drawn upon for well-chosen illustrations.

After defining the origin of the word "Tibet," the writer describes the geographical position of the country. It forms an integral portion of the Chinese Empire; is an elevated plateau, and one of the best defined natural regions in the world. These natural

divisions are three,—according to the altitude of the country above the sea level and the trend of the valleys:

(1) The northern plateau, with an average altitude of 15,000 feet. (2) Valleys parallel to the southern edge of the northern plateau, which nowhere descend below an altitude of 10,000 feet. (3) Valleys trending approximately north and south in the eastern portion of the country, and which descend to an altitude of 6,000 feet above sea level.

He narrates the history of its civilization derived from Tibetan and Chinese sources, and concludes that the present civilization and rather advanced degree of culture is entirely borrowed from China, India and possibly Turkestan, and that Tibet has contributed only the simple arts of the tent-dwelling herdsmen.

The general appearance of the people, and their physical characteristics are well described, and the author remarks that: "Intercourse with these people, extending over six years, leads me to believe that the Tibetan is kind-hearted, affectionate, and law-abiding, and that many of the most objectionable features in his character only appear in his intercourse with foreigners with whom he has had hardly any relations, and whom he instinctively fears and mistrusts, in view of the open hostility shown them by the official class throughout the country."

He speaks cautiously of society organization. As to consanguineal conditions he says: "The looseness of the marriage relations, the difficulty of identifying people who are only known by surnames, together with the habit of never using a person's name when addressing him or her, and the very marked disinclination of this people to speaking of their families or family affairs, make researches on this subject extremely difficult. The fact that throughout Tibet not only polyandry but also polygamy obtains, adds wonderfully to the confusion in which the question of consanguineal organization is involved." A table contains eighteen names of the various degrees of relationship,—all that he was able to note. The women attend to bartering, and keep nearly all the shops. Property is inherited by sons or brothers; daughters or wives get nothing.

The present coinage of Tibet has been in use since the middle of the 18th century. It comprises only one coin, a silver one of the nominal value of about 16 cents. Fractional money is made by cutting this coin into pieces, but in most parts of the country money is little used, the people bartering for many of the things they require.